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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [MARR](#) [EI](#)

SUBJECT: IRISH ESTABLISH CABINET COMMITTEE TO REVIEW
RENDITIONS ALLEGATIONS AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

REF: A. DUBLIN 571

- [B. DUBLIN 134](#)
- [C. 07 DUBLIN 919](#)
- [D. 07 DUBLIN 916](#)
- [E. 07 DUBLIN 899](#)
- [F. 07 DUBLIN 898](#)

Classified By: DCM Robert Faucher; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

[11.](#) (C) The Irish government has established a Cabinet-level committee to review Ireland's human rights policies) and has given the committee a mandate to approach the incoming U.S. administration to review concerns about renditions, the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and intensive interrogation techniques. The Committee will also consider strengthening the powers of the police to inspect aircraft transiting Ireland, possibly via ICAO. Clearly a sop to the Green Party, which is in trouble over budget cuts and is threatening to block Ireland's signing the new bilateral pre-clearance agreement, the establishment of this committee will increase noise levels for a short time, but things should soon return to normal. End summary.

Cabinet-Level Committee Established

[12.](#) (U) On October 29, the Government of Ireland established a Cabinet-level committee to review Ireland's human rights policies - including a mandate to approach the transition team of the incoming U.S. Administration to review Irish concerns about renditions, the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and intensive interrogation techniques which are considered torture (such as waterboarding). The Committee will also review appropriate authorities to ensure that the national police force (Garda) and airport authorities have sufficient powers to search and inspect all aircraft transiting Ireland, perhaps through strengthening the Air Navigation and Transport Acts. Finally the committee will report on Irish Ministry of Justice actions to improve Garda training in basic human rights.

[13.](#) (U) The committee will be composed of two Green Party Ministers) Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Eamon Ryan and Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government John Gormley - and three Fianna Fail Ministers - Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheal Martin, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform Dermot Ahern, and Minister for Transport Noel Dempsey.

Sop to the Greens

[14.](#) (C) Reports indicated that, in part, this new initiative

is based on pressure from Green Party Ministers to make progress on human rights commitments made in the pre-election coalition manifesto, "Programme for Government," which undertook to thwart renditions through effective enforcement of the Criminal Justice (United Nations Convention Against Torture) Act, 2000 and the Geneva Conventions Acts, 1962-1998.

¶15. (U) Amnesty International publicly welcomed the aircraft search provision, declaring it a "massive victory" for human rights in Ireland. However, the head of Amnesty International Ireland, Colm O'Gorman, stated that he wants to see the "action behind the words" from the government on the issue.

¶16. (C) Since the issue of renditions broke in 2004, the Irish have accepted assurances they received from President Bush and Secretary Rice in that year that no renditions had taken place through Ireland. Top Irish officials, including the Prime Minister, have declared that they would take the USG at its word and not pursue inspections of U.S. aircraft transiting Shannon and Dublin Airports without sufficient probable cause. As recently as December 2007, then Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and then Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern categorically rejected Opposition and Irish Human Rights Commission calls for random inspections of U.S. aircraft (Refs E and F). Current Prime Minister Brian Cowen, then Minister of Finance, supported this position. (Note: From 2003 to the end of 2007, 1,059,383 U.S. troops transited Shannon airport on 8,698 flights. End note.)

¶17. (C) Irish Foreign Affairs Political Director Rory Montgomery told the Embassy November 3 that this action was designed by the government to assuage the Green Party/junior coalition partner) and demonstrate that the Greens still have influence at the Cabinet table) after the Greens came under fire from party members in the wake of the recent austerity budget (Ref A), particularly for its support of Fianna Fail in defending cuts in the education sector. At the October 29 Cabinet meeting, the Government sought approval to sign the U.S.-Ireland Preclearance Agreement (Ref C). Green Party ministers refused, complaining that they were getting beaten up over the budget cuts and had nothing to show for their time in government. They linked approval of the Preclearance Agreement to actions on renditions and other human rights concerns about which their core supporters are neuralgic, according to Montgomery.

¶18. (C) Montgomery continued that the Cabinet secured Green Party approval for the Preclearance Agreement signing by agreeing to set up the ministerial-level committee to look into human rights concerns. In addition to the three elements of the committee's mandate, the committee was also tasked with approaching ICAO to examine whether the Chicago Convention could be changed to better facilitate aircraft inspections. However, Montgomery considered this a real "non-starter."

¶19. (C) Montgomery went on to say that he expects the government to discuss the committee and its work in upcoming parliamentary sessions. He stated that Foreign Minister Martin would make it clear that there were no new allegations leading to the establishment of the committee and that the government stands by the USG assurances on renditions that it has already received.

Comment

¶10. (C) The new committee seems intent on pressing its views of renditions, Guantanamo, and torture with the new administration, but it expects a welcoming reception regardless of who wins the presidential election. The establishment of the committee was clearly a sop to a beleaguered Green Party and expectations are low that it will actively engage U.S. interlocutors. We should expect a bit of noise on this issue in the weeks ahead, but it should soon die down.

FOLEY